

Six Democratic members of the House, led by U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA) today issued a detailed memo to the Obama Administration outlining several necessary conditions before the President submits the Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to the House for consideration.

In an accompanying letter to President Obama, the Members write, “[a]t a time of economic uncertainty, with millions of families across our country struggling to support themselves, it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to do everything in our power to promote and protect American jobs. One of the most important ways we can safeguard the ability of American families to make a living and keep their jobs is by guaranteeing they are not in competition with workers in other countries whose wages are kept low not simply because their countries are poor, but because they lack the essential democratic rights that American workers have to improve their standards of living – the right to speak out, to protest, to organize unions, to bargain collectively and directly with their employers, and to freely support political efforts to improve their economic condition. Colombia, sadly, stands out as a country where wages are kept low and workers are repressed through widespread violence against employees trying to better their lot.”

The memo outlines the Members’ concerns on issues including violence against trade unionists and other human rights defenders in Colombia, impunity and worker rights. It also outlines concrete, achievable measures that must be undertaken in Colombia before the Administration submits the FTA for Congressional consideration.

In addition to Reps. McGovern and Miller, the memo was also signed by U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), U.S. Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME), U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA).

Attached are the cover letter to President Obama; the “Advancing Colombian Labor and Human Rights and Congressional Consideration of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement” memo and a chart outlining the continuing violence against Colombian trade unionists.